

**SUMMARY OF THE
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 11, 2000**

The Proficiency Testing Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference, on Tuesday, January 11, 2000. The meeting was led by its chair, Ms. Barbara Burmeister of the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene. *The main purpose of this meeting was to discuss follow-up items from the Fifth NELAC Interim Meeting. These items include the Section 2.0 Interim Guidance Document, the PT Fields of Testing and acceptance criteria, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), test questions for the assessor training course, and comments received to date.*

INTRODUCTION

The status of the Action Items from the teleconference on December 15, 1999 is as follows:

- Ms. Burmeister finalized changes to Section 2.0 Guidance Document and sent to the committee for review. She will review the changes in today's meeting.
- The list of PT fields of testing and acceptance criteria has not yet been finalized. This is an agenda item for today's meeting.
- Section 2.4.1 needs to be clarified regarding required PT samples (i.e., what the laboratories need to participate in).
- Ms. Burmeister said that the Chapter 1 committee is supposed to contact her about the definition of matrix as it pertains to PT fields of testing (FOT), but has not done so yet.
- The committee will re-evaluate standards per recent changes in Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) regulations in a future teleconference.
- The FAQs have been edited. Ms. Marykay Steinman will review the changes in today's meeting. Once complete it will be submitted to Board of Directors for review.
- It has not been resolved whether Transition Committee or National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) Accrediting Authority (AA) group will endorse the use of PT FOT list for all laboratories seeking NELAP accreditation. Ms. Burmeister said that the list will be reviewed by the Transition Committee and the NELAP AA group as soon as it is finalized by the PT Committee.
- The date that NELAP AA group will require laboratories to analyze PT samples for analytes beyond the water supply (WS)/water pollution (WP) scope has not yet been resolved.

ITEMS OF DISCUSSION

Section 2.0 Interim Guidance Document

Ms. Burmeister made changes to the guidance document as recommended by Ms. Roxanne Robinson from the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA) and distributed

the document to the committee. The changes were made to the fifth paragraph as described below. (New text is double underlined and deleted text is struck through.)

Other examples of nationally recognized organizations would be organizations such as NIST, foreign "NIST equivalents" such as signatories to the Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (APLAC) or signatories to the European Co-operation for Accreditation (EA) or other federal bodies that operate PT Provider accreditation programs. Accreditation organizations that have ~~Memorandums of Understanding~~ a Mutual Recognition Agreement for accreditation of laboratories in place with NIST or foreign "NIST equivalents" would also be considered nationally recognized.

The committee accepted these edits and had no other suggested changes. Ms. Burmeister said that if no other comments are received by January 15, 2000, the document will be submitted to Ms. Jeanne Hankins, NELAC/NELAP Director for approval.

PT Fields of Testing and Acceptance Criteria

Mr. Matt Caruso provided an update on the development of the PT FOT and acceptance criteria. A request to add analytes to the PT Fields of Testing which are subject to regulation under the Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR) had been received was discussed.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) published final revisions to the UCMR on September 17, 1999. Ms. Carol Madding said that information about the UCMR is available on EPA's Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water Website (<http://www.epa.gov/safewater/standard/pp/ucmpp.html>). She also said that she would send a list of the contaminants to the PT Committee. The PT FOT subcommittee will review the list and research PT data for the UCMR analytes for possible inclusion in the PT FOT list.

Mr. Stephen Arpie from Absolute Standards submitted some questions to the committee about the PT FOT list that was distributed at the NELAC V interim meeting. Mr. Caruso provided answers to some of the questions during committee discussion. At Ms. Burmeister's request, he then agreed to draft a formal response to Mr. Arpie for the committee.

Comments were also received from Ms. Michelle Kropilak for the State of New Jersey. She commented that the acceptance criteria ranges were too high for several of the analyte groups and offered some recommendations as to what the ranges should be. A committee member remarked that the ranges should be set at different levels, however some of these levels may not have historical data.

Mr. Chuck Wibby recommended that for solid and hazardous waste, the committee should not use linear regression equations, but instead should base the acceptance criteria on statistical analysis. He said that although linear regression works for water samples, PT Providers may have problems with solid and hazardous waste because of the different matrices. He suggested that in the future, the committee may be able to change over to regression equations. Mr. Caruso agreed with Mr. Wibby's comments, but said that if regression equations do not work now for solid and hazardous waste, they probably will not work in the future either. Mr. Wibby then recommended that for WS and WP, they should include only the analytes for which historical data is available. The problem is that some of the analytes are not stable in water or are very

difficult to make standards for. He recommended that for water samples, if there is no regression equation for a chemical analyte, then the analyte should not be included on the FOT list.

A motion was made that chemical water analytes beyond the scope of the WS and WP be included in the PT Fields of Testing only if a regression equation is available. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously by the voting committee members. Mr. Caruso will remove all those analytes that do not meet this criteria.

A motion was also made that for chemical solid and hazardous waste analytes, acceptance limits be determined using robust statistical analysis (i.e., mean \pm 3 standard deviations). The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Comment was made that as the mean approaches the practical quantitation limit (PQL), there are problems with the analysis. Therefore, the recommendation was to set concentration ranges where they make sense. The committee will take a look at setting maximums and keeping the low from being too close to the PQL.

Ms. Burmeister raised the topic of whether or not the acceptance criteria should be made public along with the minimum list of analytes in the PT FOT list. At the Fifth NELAC Interim Meeting, many people expressed a preference for having the acceptance criteria made public. Ms. Burmeister asked the committee whether or not they were comfortable with this and she then polled the committee for their response. The vote was four to one for making the acceptance criteria publicly available.

Mr. Wibby will send Mr. Caruso an additional data set to use in developing the acceptance limits. Mr. Caruso will revise the PT Fields of Testing list and acceptance criteria according to the decisions made today and send a draft out to committee members by January 21, 2000.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Ms. Marykay Steinman reviewed changes to the PT FAQs. The revisions to the FAQs were in response to comments made by Ms. Hankins. After discussing each of the changes with the committee, Ms. Steinman agreed to finalize the changes and send the document to the committee for review. It will then be resubmitted to Ms. Hankins for approval and posting on the NELAC Website.

ELAB Assignments to NELAC PT Committee

Ms. Burmeister conveyed a request from the Environmental Laboratory Advisory Committee (ELAB) to the PT Committee. She said that ELAB wanted the committee to write a report on anything that is not working with the NELAC PT Program. The report is due before the Sixth NELAC Annual Meeting scheduled for June 2000.

Test Questions for PT Chapter

Ms. Burmeister compiled a list of 60 test questions from PT Committee members for the NELAC assessor training course. She sent the combined list back to the committee for review. Ms. Burmeister said that questions on air were received from Ms. Lara Autry of the USEPA. However, since this appendix is not yet final, those questions will not be included in the assessor

training course. The questions will be saved for future use because they will be needed eventually.

Ms. Burmeister asked whether there were any comments or corrections to the list of questions. It was requested that one question about summary statistics be rephrased because the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) has encouraged PT providers to report some summary statistics to their clients, although it is not required. Ms. Burmeister said that she would make the change. She will then send the list of questions to Ms. Hankins and Ms. Margo Hunt at USEPA.

Comments Received to Date

Comments received to date are as follows:

- Ms. Roxanne Robinson, A2LA (re: interim Section 2.0). These comments have been addressed and are discussed above in the section “Section 2.0 Interim Guidance Document.”
- Mr. Avery, Arkansas (re: permanent Section 2.0). Ms. Burmeister will distribute these comments to be discussed in a future conference call.
- Mr. Avery, Arkansas (re: PT FOT). These comments have been discussed above in the section “PT Fields of Testing and Acceptance Criteria.”
- Mr. Bennett Osborne, Oregon Environmental Lab Association (re: C.1.1). Ms. Burmeister will distribute these comments to be discussed in a future conference call.
- Mr. Arpie, Absolute Standards (re: PT questions). These comments have been discussed above in the section “PT Fields of Testing and Acceptance Criteria.”

EPA/NIST Update

Ms. Reenie Parris was asked how NIST will notify the public of accreditations. She responded that the NIST Webpage will be updated every three months. Ms. Parris did not have any updates to report, but did request that the committee keep her apprised of any problems or issues that arise during the implementation phase of NELAP.

MISCELLANEOUS

Ms. Kropilak raised a question about a special case she was dealing with in New Jersey. RTC and NSI had originally applied jointly to NIST for NELAP accreditation. Then NSI refiled separately a second time and received approval as a NIST PT provider. NIST announced the first class of approved PT providers on October 25, 1999, but NSI was not included in the first class. NSI was later approved, but their certificate does not provide a start date (just an expiration date). Ms. Kropilak received study results for a laboratory which analyzed PT samples from NSI. The study dates were from October 12, 1999, to November 29, 1999. She questioned whether or not she could use this study data for NELAP purposes. The committee agreed that for studies which began before or on October 25, 1999, PT samples from any NIST applicant are acceptable.

ACTION ITEMS
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 11, 2000

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Ms. Barbara Burmeister will submit the Section 2.0 Interim Guidance Document to Ms. Jeanne Hankins at USEPA if no additional comments are received by January 15, 2000.	1/16/00
2.	Review analytes regulated under the Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR) for possible inclusion in the PT FOT list.	
3.	Mr. Matt Caruso will draft a response to Mr. Stephen Arpie's questions about the PT Fields of Testing.	
4.	Mr. Chuck Wibby will send additional data to Mr. Caruso for use in developing acceptance criteria.	1/12/00
5.	Mr. Caruso will revise the PT Fields of Testing and acceptance criteria according to decisions made in today's meeting.	1/21/00
6.	Ms. Marykay Steinman will revise the FAQs and send them to the committee for review.	1/21/00
7.	Committee will develop report on NELAP PT issues for ELAB.	6/1/00
8.	Ms. Burmeister will revise the list of PT questions for the NELAC assessor training course and submit them to Ms. Hankins and Ms. Margo Hunt at USEPA.	1/12/00
9.	Ms. Burmeister will distribute comments from Mr. George Avery (re: permanent Section 2.0) and Mr. Bennett Osborne (re: C.1.1) to the committee.	

**PARTICIPANTS
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 11, 2000**

Name	Affiliation	Address
Burmeister, Barbara Chair	Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene	T: (608) 833-1770 F: (608) 833-2803 E: burmie@mail.slh.wisc.edu
Autry, Lara	USEPA/OAQPS	T: (919) 541-5544 F: (919) 541-1039 E: autry.lara@epa.gov
Caruso, Matthew	NY State Dept. of Health	T: (518) 485-5570 F: (518) 485-5568 E: caruso@wadsworth.org
Glick, Edward (invited guest)	U.S. EPA, Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water	T: (513) 569-7939 F: (513) 569-7191 E: glick.edward@epamail.epa.gov
Haynes, RaeAnn (absent)	Oregon Dept. of Environmental Quality	T: (503) 229-5983 F: (503) 229-6924 E: haynes.raeann@deq.state.or.us
Jackson, Larry (absent)	Environmental Quality Management, NH	T: (603) 924-6852 F: (603) 924-6346 E: lpjackson@msn.com
Kropilak, Michele	NJ Dept. of Environmental Protection	T: (609) 984-7732 F: (609) 777-1774 E: Mkropilak@dep.state.nj.us
Madding, Carol (invited guest)	U.S. EPA, Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water	T: (513) 569-7401 F: (513) 569-7191 E: madding.caroline@epamail.epa.gov
Nettrour, Cindy	American Water Works Services Co., Inc.	T: (618) 239-0516 F: (618) 235-6349 E: cnettrou@bellevillelab.com
Parker, Faust	Espy, Houston & Assoc, Biomon. Lab	T: (713) 977-1500 F: (713) 977-9233 E: fausteha@wt.net
Parris, Reenie (invited guest)	NIST, Analytical Chemistry Division	T: (301) 975-3103 F: (301) 976-8671 E: Reenie.Parris@NIST.gov
Rhyne, Anne Board Liaison (absent)	TX Nat. Res. Conserv. Comm.	T: (512) 239-1291 F: (512) 239-2550 E: arhyne@tnrcc.state.tx.us

Attachment B (Continued)

**PARTICIPANTS
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 11, 2000**

Name	Affiliation	Address
Steinman, Marykay	M. J. Reider Associates, Inc.	T: (616) 961-4713 F: (616) 961-7530 E: bcoyle2152@aol.com
Wibby, Chuck	Environmental Resources Association	T: (303) 431-8454 F: (303) 421-0159 E: qcstds@aol.com
Lloyd, Jenny (contractor support)	Research Triangle Institute	T: (919) 541-5942 F: (919) 541-5929 E: jml@rti.org